



# **NEWS RELEASE**

**OFFICE OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
(PUBLIC AFFAIRS)**  
WASHINGTON, D.C. - 20301  
**PLEASE NOTE DATE**

**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 21, 2000**

**No. 432-00  
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(703)697-5737(public/industry)**

## **DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ISSUES ANTI-HARASSMENT GUIDELINES**

Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen received and approved the Department of Defense working group's action plan to eliminate all forms of harassment today. As recommended in the plan, the Department adopted an "overarching principle" that emphasizes that harassment for any reason undermines good order and discipline and has no place in the armed forces.

In addition, the Department intends to adopt the rest of the 13-point "action plan" that focuses needed attention on the problems of mistreatment generally and harassment of alleged or perceived homosexuals in particular. The plan ensures that commanders are ultimately responsible for training personnel on the Department's anti-harassment policies and holding accountable harassers and those who tolerate harassment. It also clearly states that information regarding sexual orientation is never necessary for a harassment complaint to be taken seriously. In that regard, it encourages the Services to teach all personnel, especially supervisors, that persons who receive such complaints must not ask about sexual orientation and persons who report harassment ought not disclose such information. Everyone must also be trained to understand the consequences of violating these principles.

A Department-wide directive will be issued outlining the key tenets of the overarching principle. It will emphasize that mistreatment, harassment and inappropriate comments or gestures, including those based on sexual orientation, are not acceptable.

Training and its effectiveness also featured prominently in the working group's deliberations and recommendations. One new initiative is the action plan's requirement that the Services must review their training programs annually to ensure they contain all information required by law and policy. It also requires them to tailor their programs to their audiences. To measure training effectiveness and compliance with DoD policy, the Services will be required to ensure feedback or reporting mechanisms are in place to measure knowledge, behavior, and climate.

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Under Secretary of the Air Force Carol DiBattiste chaired the working group which was established by Cohen on March 24, 2000, to examine the findings of a Department of Defense Inspector General report on harassment of military personnel who are alleged or perceived to be homosexual. The group was comprised of senior civilian and military officials from each Service who met regularly for four months to consider such issues as eliminating mistreatment, harassment, and inappropriate comments or gestures; training; reporting of harassment; enforcement of policies prohibiting harassment; and measurement of anti-harassment program effectiveness.

In the course of its review, the working group requested and reviewed public comment, information on individual Service anti-harassment efforts, and briefings on the DoD survey from the DoD Inspector General and principles of behavior from the Behavioral Science Faculty at the U.S. Military Academy. At Secretary Cohen's request, it also considered the Army Inspector General report of investigation into PVT Winchell's death. The working group's recommendations address problems regarding harassment identified in the Army report.

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PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

21 JUL 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF THE ARMY  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE  
CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY  
CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE AIR FORCE  
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

SUBJECT: Approval and Implementation of the Action Plan Submitted in Response to the DoD Inspector General's Report on the Military Environment With Respect to the Homosexual Conduct Policy

On 24 March, Secretary Cohen established a working group, composed of senior military and civilian representatives from each of the Services, to review the DoD Inspector General's "Report on the Military Environment With Respect to the Homosexual Conduct Policy." The working group was also tasked to propose a draft action plan outlining the measures necessary to address the findings of the report.

Secretary Cohen received and approved the working group's proposed action plan and has directed that it be forwarded to the Services for implementation. As you execute this plan, please ensure that all personnel understand the importance of these measures. They are critical to eliminating all forms of harassment and are essential to maintain the good order and discipline necessary of our forces. My office will oversee those tasks required of the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

I appreciate your leadership and assistance in implementing the attached action plan.

Attachment:  
As stated



## **Anti-Harassment Action Plan**

### ***General Recommendations:***

1. The Department of Defense should adopt an overarching principle regarding harassment, including that based on sexual orientation:

"Treatment of all individuals with dignity and respect is essential to good order and discipline. Mistreatment, harassment, and inappropriate comments or gestures undermine this principle and have no place in our armed forces. Commanders and leaders must develop and maintain a climate that fosters unit cohesion, esprit de corps, and mutual respect for all members of the command or organization."

2. The Department of Defense should issue a single Department-wide directive on harassment.
  - It should make clear that mistreatment, harassment, and inappropriate comments or gestures, including that based on sexual orientation, are not acceptable.
  - Further, the directive should make clear that commanders and leaders will be held accountable for failure to enforce this directive.

### ***Recommendations Regarding Training:***

3. The Services shall ensure feedback or reporting mechanisms are in place to measure homosexual conduct policy training and anti-harassment training effectiveness in the following three areas: knowledge, behavior, and climate.
4. The Services shall review all homosexual conduct policy training and anti-harassment training programs to ensure they address the elements and intent of the DoD overarching principle and implementing directive.
5. The Services shall review homosexual conduct policy training and anti-harassment training programs annually to ensure they contain all information required by law and policy, including the DoD overarching principle and implementing directive, and are tailored to the grade and responsibility levels of their audiences.

### ***Recommendation Regarding Reporting:***

6. The Services shall review all avenues for reporting mistreatment, harassment, and inappropriate comments or gestures to ensure they facilitate effective leadership response.
  - Reporting at the lowest level possible within the chain of command shall be encouraged.
  - Personnel shall be informed of other confidential and non-confidential avenues to report mistreatment, harassment, and inappropriate comments or gestures.

## **Anti-Harassment Action Plan**

7. The Services shall ensure homosexual conduct policy training and anti-harassment training programs address all avenues to report mistreatment, harassment, and inappropriate comments or gestures and ensure persons receiving reports of mistreatment, harassment, and inappropriate comments or gestures know how to handle these reports.

8. The Services shall ensure that directives, guidance, and training clearly explain the application of the "don't ask, don't tell," policy in the context of receiving and reporting complaints of mistreatment, harassment, and inappropriate comments or gestures, including:

- Complaints will be taken seriously, regardless of actual or perceived sexual orientation;
- Those receiving complaints must not ask about sexual orientation -- questions about sexual orientation are not needed to handle complaints; violators will be held accountable; and
- Those reporting harassment ought not tell about or disclose sexual orientation -- information regarding sexual orientation is not needed for complaints to be taken seriously.

### ***Recommendations Regarding Enforcement:***

9. The Services shall ensure that commanders and leaders take appropriate action against anyone who engages in mistreatment, harassment, and inappropriate comments or gestures.

10. The Services shall ensure that commanders and leaders take appropriate action against anyone who condones or ignores mistreatment, harassment, and inappropriate comments or gestures.

11. The Services shall examine homosexual conduct policy training and anti-harassment training programs to ensure they provide tailored training on enforcement mechanisms.

### ***Recommendations Regarding Measurement:***

12. The Services shall ensure inspection programs assess adherence to the DoD overarching principle and implementing directive through measurement of knowledge, behavior, and climate.

13. The Services shall determine the extent to which homosexual conduct policy training and anti-harassment training programs, and the implementation of this action plan, are effective in addressing mistreatment, harassment, and inappropriate comments or gestures.